

OXC-3223  
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March 16, 1962

Dear Gene:

Re: O Configuration

We have been reviewing the problems involved in trying to rapidly assemble an O configuration for use in the Idealist vehicle and have concluded that we couldn't possibly get one ready to fly in less than nine months even if we were to concentrate on it to the exclusion of those planned for the O vehicle. Not to belabor the point, but our principal trouble is lack of manpower. I had high hopes of getting our friends on the West Coast to make the investigations and grant their clearances. This they have done but we run into a snag when we try to get cross clearances from your people. Perhaps this log jam will break sometime but, in the meantime, I wish I had sent the original requests through you.

However, that is beside the point. As you know we, as a result of our December tests, have torn our prototype configuration down and refurbished it. We hope we have corrected some items that gave erratic performance, improved reliability, reduced maintenance, etc. This prototype should be ready for further testing by 15 April. If such testing should indicate that we have achieved a level of performance consistently equal to the best that we achieved in December, you might consider flying the prototype on operational missions on the Idealist vehicle.

Certainly we are reluctant to agree to this because we do need the prototype for testing certain features in the O vehicle - such as the thermal problem as a major example. We had hoped to obtain information from the Prototype which would be useful in the design of the Final Models. But from your estimate of flying schedules, it appears that we will be very far downstream before we get any tests at all in the O vehicle.

Another facet of our reluctance to "go-for-broke" in the I vehicle is our lack of trained and experienced field crews. The present B configuration people have worked with their configuration and with their counterparts for years and have a smooth working team. The only manner in which we can hope to overcome this is to put our top people out in the field for such missions and their preliminaries. This would tend to slow us down on the design of the final models but, with the schedules as I understand them, this would not be serious.

Therefore, I suggest:

1. No attempt be made to make a new F model for the I vehicle.
2. That the P model be tested as much as possible in the I vehicle and the tests carefully analyzed.
3. Based on the results of these tests, a decision be made whether to use the P model in the I vehicle for mission work.

ELG/MDG

  
E. L. G.